The Practicality of Play: Democratic, Liberal Arts Education

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Introduction

With the rise of fascism in the late 1930's to early 1940's, there was a parallel search for education reform in order to combat it. Scholars pointed to the disintegration of education as a source of intellectual disarmament against the fascist threat. But a course of action was split between the progressive educational ideas fathered by John Dewey and the classical approach encouraged by Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler. Dewey claimed that the Great Books education by Hutchins and Adler required a human authority to determine which "truths" were absolute, which resembled the "distrust of freedom and consequent appeal to some fixed authority" of fascism.[1] On the other hand, Adler argued that a lack of absolute truth in education ultimately left students intellectually weak in the face of a very serious threat.

At the end of World War II, the imminent threat of fascism passed, but questions posed about classical versus progressive educational reform by Dewey and Adler remained throughout the Cold War and still continue today, especially with regards to the field of liberal arts education. There seems to be widespread agreement in a need for educational improvements, and yet the relevance of liberal arts and humanities remains ambiguous. Defenders of a Great Books education insist that without reading the Great Books, a student's education is incomplete. According to the Great Books theory, cultivating intellectual virtues are good in and of themselves, and a liberal arts education provides students with a critical awareness of the great thinkers and ideas that came before them.

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[1] Westbrook, Robert B. *John Dewey And American Democracy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 519.

On the other hand, Dewey's sympathizers may respond that the liberal arts are ultimately elitist and relatively undemocratic. Assuming there is a set of classic texts and ideas that are more important than all others also means there must be a group of elite individuals to determine which texts and ideas are included, which indicates a certain authoritarian rule over liberal arts. Additionally, the relevant skills learned from liberal arts education, such as critical thinking, writing, and reading, can and should be learned by applying it to a practical endeavor. This is how college courses such as "Writing for Medical Students" have come to be developed; instead of being placed into a liberal arts course that teaches students to read and write generally through a Great Books curriculum, students are taught according to their personal career choice. Despite efforts in democratizing liberal arts, it remains a branch of education reserved for the wealthy, while the rest of society gets a more useful education.

This is the struggle of liberal arts education, and it revolves around three main tensions, which seem to fit together in two distinct, but not entirely comfortable, puzzles. The first tension compares the benefits of a practical versus a liberal curriculum. A practical curriculum, which is developed from Dewey's thought, focuses mainly on understanding the applicability of learned skills, while a liberal curriculum from Adler and Hutchins' thought focuses on cultivating intellectual skills and encourages students to pursue subjects such as philosophy.

The next tension focuses on which method of teaching successfully leads to practical or liberal educational goals, and the methods are torn between Dewey's progressive education and Adler's traditional education. Dewey's progressive thought suggests that students should spend time learning to discover, mostly through hands-on

experience, which then prepares them to make future discoveries and continue their education beyond the classroom. Adler, however, prefers traditional teaching methods through lecture, critical reading and assessments.

The final tension is between democratic and elitist educational aims. A democratic education, supported by Dewey, appeals to all students despite their interests and backgrounds, and also provides them with useful skills and opportunities. In contrast elitist education, proposed by Adler, can only be attained by students who enjoy and excel in critical reading, and relies on the assumption that there is a specific set of Great Books that should be read.

These three tensions fit together into two different educational philosophies. The first centers on Dewey's thought, which suggests that the best course of action in educational reform is to focus on a practical curriculum with progressive teaching methods because this style offers the most democratic results. In contrast, following a Great Books education would offer a liberal curriculum with traditional teaching methods, but ultimately lead to more elitist results. As a student of liberal arts who has experienced the thrill of reading and understanding Plato or Shakespeare, or the exhilaration of writing a short work of creative fiction, it seems that I *should* be naturally drawn to a liberal arts education and Adler's theories, regardless of the elitist aims. However, upon further research, I found that Dewey's methods aligned with my ideas about liberal arts education.

Dewey's practical educational model, despite its interpretation as vocationalism, focuses on providing individuals with experiences that directly enhance their lives. By assuming that an individual's life is *only* enhanced through their career, practical

education can be understood to exclude the study of art, literature and philosophy. However, when the end of education is to prepare students to be the best and most virtuous citizens, educating them in the liberal arts proves to be practical as well. This type of education may even be *more* democratic because it offers an opportunity for liberal education to everyone. Thus, I suggest that the choice between practical and liberal education is a false choice, and I propose an alternative system that includes *both* practical and liberal education based on Dewey's thought.

The idea of a practical liberal arts education comes from Aristotelian thought. In the *Politics*, Aristotle analyzes what the best kind of life is for a citizen in order to determine what type of government can offer that type of life to the community. He ultimately determines that the best type of life is one that involves leisure time, and the best government offers citizens not only an opportunity for leisure, but an opportunity for the best kind of leisure. For Aristotle, however, this was an undemocratic insight; the only individuals capable of pursing virtuous leisure were free men.

On the other hand, the best and perhaps most democratic educational system is one that at least offers citizens an opportunity for virtuous leisure time, or play. I use the word "play" instead of leisure because for Aristotle, the best kind of leisure was philosophical contemplation, but I would like to expand the definition to include aesthetic appreciation and artistic activity as well. Dewey himself confronts leisure time as a teleological end in the work *Art as Experience,* which suggests that his educational view may ultimately support some form of liberal education, instead of a practical education.

This thesis analyzes the three tensions of a liberal arts education focusing on play as the end of the educational system instead practical skills. I first offer a summary of

Aristotle's argument for leisure, and then analyze Adler and Hutchins educational theory to determine its merits and flaws with regard to leisure. Finally, I suggest that Dewey's educational philosophy has been misunderstood to suggest a practical education; but when interpreted through the lens of leisure and his book *Art as Experience*, he supports a liberal arts educational system with both progressive and traditional teaching methods as ultimately democratic in aim.

Aristotle's Vision of Leisure and the Origin of Play

Aristotle's *Politics* offers the first philosophical analysis of leisure time. Aristotle sets out to determine "what form of political community is best of all for those who are most able to realize their ideal of life"[2] and throughout the text, he determines that occupation is merely a means to an end. Normally, we value our occupation because it provides a means to some other end; through some sort of compensation for our occupation, we then can provide shelter, clothing, food and some luxuries to our families and ourselves. Instead, leisure is an end in and of itself, ultimately leading to happiness, and is in fact the "first principle of all action"[3] according to Aristotle. Leisure time is intrinsically valuable; the activities we pursue in leisure, such as reading, painting, dancing, and writing, are undertaken for no other reason than our own pleasure. Thus, because a life that includes leisure is ideal, it is the end of the polis to provide opportunities for leisure for citizens who are able to enjoy it.

Aristotle's definition of leisure proves to be more complicated than intuitive. He suggests that the purpose of leisure is not for amusement, because if it were "then

[2] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1943), 1260b28
[3] ibid, 1337b33

amusement would be the end of life",[4] which he sees as inconceivable. Amusement has its place, Aristotle admits, especially among serious occupations, where it can act as a medicine because "the emotion which [amusement creates] in the soul is a relaxation, and from the pleasure we obtain rest"[5]. Thus, leisure time is not necessarily pleasurable in the same way as amusing activity is pleasurable. A life spent exclusively in amusing activities is not the type of life that Aristotle has in mind.

In book eight of the *Politics* Aristotle notes there are four branches of education in the Greek educational system, "(1) reading and writing, (2) gymnastics, (3) music and (4) drawing"[6]. Numbers (1), (2), and (4) he acknowledges as useful, but the use of number (3), music (which possibly includes poetry, drama and art), is not clear. Aristotle claims that the purpose of a musical education is to give students the opportunity to "use leisure well".[7] In other words, there is no teleological end to studying music; rather music is an end in and of itself. There are many activities that may have no concrete use beyond the pleasure that they bring to the individuals experiencing them.

Further, Aristotle suggests that truly living well involves leisure time that is spent pursing pleasures of the mind, which is good for the soul. The best leisure time, according to Aristotle, is spent with "philosophy and temperance and justice"[8] in order to determine how to live a good life. This means utilizing leisure time to make yourself a more virtuous and moral person with regards to your self (temperance) and with regards to others (justice).

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[4] ibid, 1337b35
[5] ibid, 1337b40
[6] ibid, 1337b24-5
[7] ibid, 1337b31
[8] ibid, 1134a30

Aristotle's ideal leisure time is inherently undemocratic. This type of "best life" simply is not available to the masses, according to Aristotle. First, Aristotle believes that in order to experience leisure as he envisions it, you must have the support of women and slaves. Alternatively, women and slaves are not capable of having leisure time because they are busy working in other ways. For example, slaves may spend most of their time working in the field, and women may be working in the domestic sphere[9]. Next, Aristotle also believes that in order to experience virtuous leisure, you must have a natural capacity for virtuous thinking. Essentially, this means that some people do not have the ability or talent to take part in philosophical thought. He does acknowledge that some slaves may have this natural ability, but are unable to use it because they are slaves.[10]

My definition of play expands upon Aristotle's definition of virtuous leisure. Aristotle understands leisure time to be not particularly useful to other individuals; it only benefits the individual experiencing it. Further, Aristotle believes *virtuous* leisure time is spent in philosophical contemplation of the good life or of the cosmos, however other good forms of leisure include music, poetry and art. "Play" is time spent in pleasurable, but otherwise selfish contemplation. By "selfish" I mean that it is not particularly useful to other individuals, unless it is unintentionally useful because it evokes a sense of play in those individuals. But the *intention* of play is for individual pleasure. For example, an author may write a book that creates a sense of contemplative pleasure (play) in another individual, however the if author's *primary purpose* in writing the book was for his own, selfish contemplation, then the author wrote the book in play. Expanding the definition

[9] ibid, 1253b-1255b
[10] ibid, 12560a5-15

of leisure to include all types of play allows for a more democratic interpretation of the term. While Aristotle's virtuous leisure may require excessive amounts of time that are unavailable to individuals without the support of slaves and women, play allows for minor commitments from those with less time, while still encouraging greater thought from those with more time.

This idea of play is meant to mirror the sense of creative adventure we have as children. Children enjoy all different activities that have no clear use, such as drawing, painting, and singing, but these activities are seen as a natural part of a child's play. For example, a child who draws on a page in a sketchbook will not enjoy the drawing process any more if it is hung on the refrigerator or if it remains in the book. As they age, children are often encouraged to pursue more useful activities, and play is left behind. But based on Aristotle's understanding of leisure, play is an activity that should be both encouraged and developed throughout an individual's lifetime. A child's ability to play well, therefore, should be developed into a deeper and contemplative process and should be treated not only as a necessary part of education, but ultimately as an end of all useful pursuits.

Great Books Education: A Discussion of Hutchins and Adler's Educational Thought

The Birth of Great Books Education

Mortimer J. Adler was an Aristotelian philosopher who lived from 1902 to 2001. Although he had not finished high school, he was only swimming test away from achieving a Bachelors degree. Regardless, he served as a professor of psychology at Columbia University in the 1920's, In the later 1920's, his friend Robert Hutchins

secured a position for him as a professor of law at the University of Chicago, which he quickly took.

During high school, Adler worked as a copyboy for the New York *Sun*, with dreams of becoming a journalist and when he was promoted to secretary, he dropped out of school. He spent the money he made on books, and then began taking night courses at Columbia University. Through those courses, he was introduced to John Stuart Mill, whom he was fascinated and inspired by. That was the end of his journey to become a journalist, and the beginning of his work as a philosopher.

Four years later, Adler participated in John Erskine's General Honors course at Columbia, which included a reading list of classic texts. That general honors course is what Adler considers to be "the most important factor in [his] own education"[11] and served as the basis for his own educational theory. After describing this general honors course to Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago, Hutchins and Adler began "The Great Books Movement".

Hutchins details the need for a Great Books education in his book *The Higher Learning in America*, which Adler describes with admiration in his autobiography. In his own work, Adler frequently refers to Hutchins' philosophical writings as a defense of Great Books literature, and frequently defers to Hutchins' thought when defending Great Books literature[12].

The Great Books Movement is a response to what Hutchins calls "anti-intellectualism" in higher learning institutions, a commentary that mirrors the current

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[11] Adler, Mortimer J. *Philosopher At Large: An Intellectual Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc, 1977), 129

[12] Adler, Mortimer J. *How To Read a Book: A Guide to Reading the Great Books* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966), 322.

discussion of liberal arts education. Hutchins points out that "higher learning has disintegrated because American educational standards have collapsed—70 per cent of colleges in [America] offer "Remedial English"—and because specialism, vocationalsim, and triviality have taken over"[13]. In other words, Hutchins claims that the disintegration of higher learning is a direct result of practical education, such as the type of education that Dewey suggests. He explains that this is, in part, a result of a belief in evolution, which proves that:

> there is steady improvement from age to age. But it shows, too, that everybody's business is to get adjusted to his environment. Obviously the way to get adjusted to the environment is to know a lot about it. And so empiricism, having taken the place of thought as the basis of research, took its place, too, as the basis of education. It led by easy stages to vocationalism; because the facts you learn about your prospective environment (particularly if you love money) ought to be as immediate and useful as possible.
>
> We begin, then, with a notion of progress and end with an anti-intellectualism, which denies, in effect, that man is a rational animal. He is an animal, and he is perhaps somewhat more intelligent than most… But the idea that his education should consist of the cultivation of his intellect is, of course, ridiculous.[14]

His argument, then, is that practical education ignores man's rationality, and an anti-intellectual curriculum with progress as a goal is problematic. Instead, education should look to the cultivation of intellect through a liberal education.

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[13] Hutchins, Robert Maynard. *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967), xiii.
[14] ibid, 26

In many ways, the evolutionary argument makes *practical* sense. According to evolutionary theories, the world is driven by progress, and a practical education is perhaps best suited to further progress. Hutchins argues that practical education "denies…that man is a rational animal"[15], but this is not entirely true. Many practical endeavors, in fact, are only taught *because* man is a rational animal; the idea of a practical education is simply focusing man's rationality on a specific vocation. By doing this, man can use his rationality to improve upon current occupations in order to make them better or more efficient, thus tending toward progress.

On the other hand, Hutchins points out that a practical curriculum leads to such a rigorous focus on occupation and vocationalism that it becomes routine because it is "cut off from a center of creative thought"[16]. Students who are caught up in continually preparing for a career develop such a busy and time-consuming routine, that they lose any sense of thought in the process. Thus, practical education when understood as routine more closely resembles muscle memory than progression. In fact, by emphasizing vocational routine in a practical curriculum, students are unable to progress at all; they move about their practiced vocations unthinkingly. What's worse, if a student spends "his university career in a specific vocational preparation and then does not go into the vocation has wasted his university career"[17] because he has not learned anything beyond that particular occupation.

Hutchins argument essentially states that practical education "interferes with the education of the student"[18] and students are better off learning their vocation training for

[15] ibid, 26
[16] ibid, 45
[17] ibid, 48
[18] ibid, 51

a career in the real world, rather than a university setting. Therefore, what Hutchins claims is that the purpose of higher education is to create "educated" people, meaning people familiar with the subjects in the liberal arts, rather than prepare them for a vocation. But Hutchins does not explicitly articulate why intellectual education is so important.

Perhaps Hutchins is suggesting that an exclusively practical or vocational education denies the relevance of Aristotelian leisure for the individual, while a liberal education enhances an individual's ability to engage in leisure time. Hutchins hints at this idea when he claims that the routine of practical education causes students to become "cut off from a center of creative thought"[19], however he does not specifically acknowledge the role of leisure in every man's life. Liberal arts curriculums introduce students to the feeling of excitement that comes from reading and thinking about philosophical texts, or the pleasure of reading challenging fiction. Further, a curriculum that encourages play also introduces students to the joy of creating art through writing, painting, dancing, etc. When a student is encouraged to think critically and creatively, he is given the intellectual opportunity to engage in play during his adult life. Thus, I agree that a liberal curriculum encourages and develops intellectualism and creativity, and thus should not be forfeited to an exclusively vocational curriculum. Instead, I suggest that a liberal education is imperative because it provides individuals with the tools for intelligent and creative play, which then breaks the monotonous routine of vocation.

General Education

As a response to practical education, Adler and Hutchins developed a General Education curriculum, which focuses on cultivating the intellectual virtues that stem from

[19] ibid, 45

previous great ideas and relies on a study of great thinkers and books instead of current events and technology. Hutchins argues that the Great Books are a large part of modern studies, and yet are frequently read through secondary sources, such as textbooks. He points out that "it is entirely possible for a student to graduate from the finest American colleges without having read any [of the Great Books]"[20], which to him seems to degrade intelligence.

In *How to Read a Book* Adler develops specific rules for reading and teaching the Great Books, which relies on traditional teaching methods. He explains that despite being able to read *generally*, many people cannot read *properly*; while many people read for information, very few people read for understanding, which is a direct result of practical education. The difference is when reading for information, you are simply scanning the text for facts, whereas when reading for understanding, you are interpreting the significance of those facts[21]. In many ways, this is a democratizing project, as are many of Adler's projects (e.g. *Synopticon*, which is a two volume book in which Adler hoped to catalogue the great ideas of the Western World, and *Aristotle for Everybody,* which is a summary of Aristotle's philosophy written and interpreted by Adler in plain language). Adler genuinely believed that "philosophy is everybody's business"[22] and thus his goal was to remedy the problem of higher learning in America and to make the Great Books accessible.

In addition, Adler includes a defense of why the Great Books and traditional teaching methods are important for American education, while Hutchins' argument

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[20] ibid, 78
[21] Adler, *How To Read a Book*, 32
[22] Adler, Mortimer J. *Aristotle for Everybody: Difficult Thought Made Easy* (New York: Macmillian Publishing Co., Inc, 1978), ix

focuses more on a defense of the liberal arts as subject matter. Adler criticizes education for relying too much on "discovery", meaning Dewey's progressive teaching methods, as the core method of education. He claims "much more time is spent in training students how to discover things for themselves than in training them how to learn from others"[23], meaning that progressive education, which focuses on teaching students how to learn from themselves (through research in a laboratory, etc.) narrows the educational experience for the student. In addition to learning how to discover, students should also learn how to learn from others, such as lecturers and books. "Each generation of men," Adler explains, "should not have to learn everything for themselves, as if nothing had ever been learned before. In fact, they cannot"[24]. It's nonsensical, according to Adler, to create an environment where students rediscover previously discovered information. Instead, a larger portion of educational time should be spent teaching students to learn through traditional methods of instruction, both by reading classical texts and by listening to educators.

Adler then breaks down the differences between learning from an instructor and from reading, or from what he calls a "live teacher" and a "dead teacher" (he acknowledges that some great authors may be alive, but it is only on rare occasion that a student is able to speak with them, so by dead he means unavailable for questioning). A live teacher serves the function of showing students how to develop an art, which is particularly useful when teaching the art of discovery. However, when it comes to reading, a live teacher offers little more than what a student can learn for himself through reading for understanding. Adler explains that if students were naturally more motivated,

[23] Adler, *How To Read a Book,* 44
[24] ibid, 45

they could learn nearly everything simply by reading. But, because students are weak, "the paraphernalia of lectures, assignments, and examinations may be a surer and more efficient way of getting a certain amount of information, and even a little understanding into the rising generation's heads. Even if we had trained them how to read well, we might not be able to trust them to keep at the hard work of reading in order to learn"[25]. For Adler, then, teachers act as motivators for otherwise unmotivated students in order to ensure that they have a basic level of information and understanding.

The Great Books, on the other hand, are a primary source of information, which Adler calls an "original communication". In order to suggest that hearing original communication is more valuable than secondary information (from textbooks), Adler offers the following scenario:

> If, in the same college, two men were lecturing, one man who had discovered some truth, and the other man who was repeating second hand what he had heard reported of the first man's work, which would you rather go hear? Yes, even supposing that the repeater promised to make it a little simpler by talking down to your level, would you not suspect that the secondhand stuff lacked something in quality or quantity? If you paid the greater price in effort, you would be rewarded by better goods[26].

Adler is suggesting that although textbooks and lectures may offer a more digestible version of what the Great Books offer, it makes more sense to read it from the original source. Why not, Adler asks, read Euclidian mathematics directly from Euclid, or the history of Greece from Herodotus? Reading the original communication of a discovery

[25] ibid, 54
[26] ibid, 58

offers a more complete and accurate account of the discovery, and therefore a traditional education in which the Great Books are central to the curriculum is the best education, according to Adler. Any other type of education is merely secondary.

Adler explains that a liberal arts curriculum *necessarily* relies on traditional teaching methods. He suggests that a well-rounded education should include both progressive and traditional teaching methods. He claims that Dewey's work, *How We Think* is an "incomplete analysis of thinking because it fails to treat the sort of thinking which occurs in reading or learning by instruction in addition to the sort which occurs in investigation and discovery"[27]. Dewey's work focuses almost exclusively on discovery as the teaching method, which leads me to believe that *had* Dewey included traditional teaching methods, Adler would believe that Dewey had a complete educational system.

However, earlier in the book Adler essentially explains that the only purpose that teachers serve is to give "lectures, assignments, and examinations" in order to give "a certain amount of information, and even a little understanding, into the rising generation's heads"[28]. In other words, teachers merely assign reading, and ensure that you're reading it. If students were motivated enough, they could be self-educated exclusively through books. He even says, "the existence of such men, however, shows [self-education] can be done"[29]. In many ways, this remark is autobiographical, as Adler was relatively self-educated himself. So, he does not *actually* think that Dewey offers an *incomplete* analysis, rather he thinks that progressive education is flawed. Progressive education, according to Adler, has no place in liberal arts, rather liberal arts are best

[27] ibid, 262
[28] ibid, 54
[29] ibid, 54

taught through traditional methods. Further, Adler suggests that traditional education is the best method of education for teaching science, history and math, therefore it seems that for Adler, traditional teaching methods are the best methods overall.

However, I suggest that even a liberal arts education requires both traditional and progressive teaching methods. While the connection between progressive education in science and math is clearer, as time spent "discovering" scientific phenomena in a laboratory has already been adapted as a modern teaching method, liberal arts studies such as philosophy, literature, and the social sciences require progressive education as well. Reading the Great Books may offer background and understanding for what great philosophy looks like, but reading the Great Books, even reading them *well* in the way that Adler describes, only makes you well read, not well educated. What traditional education, composed of lectures and reading assignments, cannot provide students with is an opportunity to philosophize, and to use the ideas learned through reading to develop their own philosophies. Therefore, the "laboratory" in which progressive education takes place in the liberal arts is a classroom discussion where students are given the opportunity to develop and share their own philosophies, or through writing papers where students are able to critically analyze their own ideas. This idea can be developed for every form of play. With music education, for example, memorizing scales and chords may give students an excellent background in music theory, but it is through actually playing an instrument that a student learns to be creative and to play musically. Thus, liberal arts education requires *both* traditional and progressive teaching methods in order for students to be truly well educated.

In Defense of Dewey's Practical Education

John Dewey was a philosopher and educational reformer who saw the Civil War and both World Wars during his lifetime. He was born in 1859 and died at age 92 in 1952. In many respects, Dewey is the most influential American philosopher, and he has written on many subjects including logic, politics, and education. After getting his undergraduate degree at the University of Vermont, Dewey spent four years as a teacher, before pursuing a graduate degree in philosophy at Johns Hopkins University, focusing on the German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He then went on to teach at the University of Michigan, the University of Minnesota, the newly founded University of Chicago, and finally at Columbia University. Dewey, Adler and Hutchins all three taught at the University of Chicago.

Dewey's scholarship focused mostly on philosophy and psychology, and he is best known for his educational works. In addition, Dewey was socially active, and acted as a founding member of the American Federation of Teachers and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, among others. He continued his philosophical writing after he retired from Columbia, and published many texts after his retirement. Much of his educational work came under attack by philosophers such as Adler during World War II and throughout the Cold War. However, Dewey remains one of the most influential educational philosophers to date.[30]

According to Hutchins and Adler's understanding, practical education leads to vocationalism and monotonous routine. Ironically, when describing practical education, it was vocationalism and monotonous routine that Dewey was trying to avoid. In *How We Think*, Dewey explains that by taking educational short cuts, education is made

[30] Biographical information on John Dewey is adapted from Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (see above for citation information)

"*mechanical*, and thus restrictive of intellectual power"[31]. In other words, when students are taught by *traditional* methods to read, write and do mathematics, the ultimate end of their action is not made clear. Dewey explains that "the pupil is enjoined to do this and that specific thing, with no knowledge of any reason except that by so doing he gets his result most speedily"[32],which means that when taught by traditional methods, students will complete assignments for the sake of completion, without understanding the purpose of completing them. This means that teaching students through traditional lecture and assignments, as Adler suggests, will cause students to be caught up in monotony and routine, which Hutchins worries about in *Higher Learning in America*. Therefore, teaching *practical* knowledge by *traditional* methods is what leads to vocationalism; vocationalism is not an inherent problem of practical education.

In order to avoid the problem of vocationalism in practical education, Dewey insists that intelligence must play a role in the acquisition of practical skill[33]. The problem with traditional education is that "the acquisition of information is treated as an end in it self"; instead, the acquisition of information should be "made an integral portion of the training of thought"[34]. This means that students *must* understand the practical application of their work. In many ways, this is what Adler suggests when he makes the distinction between reading for information and reading for understanding, but Adler and Dewey come to radically different conclusions on the best method of teaching. Adler insists that rediscovering information that has already been discovered is a "tremendous

[31] Dewey, John, *How We Think* in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953 Vol. 8: 1933*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), 162
[32] ibid, 162
[33] ibid, 162
[34] ibid, 163

waste of time"[35], which is why students should read, first hand, the discoveries of the great thinkers that came before them. This thought makes logical sense, however it misses Dewey's point. By teaching through assigning readings of the great thinkers, the completion of the reading and assignments is treated as an end instead of the practical wisdom and understanding gained from the reading. Thus, when a curriculum is designed to rely on "lectures, assignments and examinations"[36] as a means of intellectual guidance to students "does not work out practically as it is theoretically supposed to do"[37]. Traditional teaching methods, perhaps unintentionally, emphasize memorization and completion as the end of education, instead of intellectualism.

Much of the disagreement between Dewey and Adler and Hutchins about proper curriculums stems from Adler and Hutchins' misunderstanding of "practical" education. For Adler and Hutchins, practical education is education that is directly related to vocation; it is little more than training for a career. Thus, "practical education" and "vocationalism" become collapsed into one idea.

By combining the definition of "practical" and "vocational", Adler and Hutchins *create* the dichotomy between "practical" and "liberal". In other words, by assuming that a practical education must be directly related to an occupation, Hutchins and Adler then must create a space for learning that is *not* directly related to occupation: liberal arts. On the contrary, Dewey does not insist that practical education must be related to occupation, and even specifically resists the "chasm between logical thought, as something abstract and remote, and the specific and concrete demands of everyday

[35] Adler, *How To Read a Book*, 45
[36] ibid, 54
[37] Dewey, *How We Think*, 180

life"[38]. Dewey's methods attempt to avoid the chasm of logical thought by developing the "native curiosity" and natural intellectualism in order to create organized and skilled thinking. Therefore, Dewey warns against separating intellectualism and practical thought, and hopes that through progressive methods, individuals can learn to bring intellectualism in to everyday experiences.

Understanding Dewey's "Experience"

The core of Dewey's educational philosophy, and his philosophy at large, rests on understanding his definition of "experience", and therefore, understanding the role of education in experiences helps clarify his understanding of practical education. Experiences are continuous, as there is continuous interaction between people and their environment, however, according to Dewey *an* experience is "when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment"[39]. This means that *an* experience is marked by a beginning, middle, and end; it takes place in the arc format of a narrative or story. There are no gaps in an experience, and any pauses are a part of the experience at large[40]. Metaphorically speaking, an experience can be compared to listening to a song; there are changes in tempo, volume, and melody and there may even be pauses in the music, but all of these parts constitute the continuous experience of that particular song. Thus, having coffee with a friend is an experience. It begins when you enter the coffee house, and it ends when you leave, and the conversation and coffee drinking that happens between those moments in time is a continuous experience. Similarly, reading a book from start to finish is an experience. Anything experienced that has a distinctive beginning, middle and end is what Dewey would call *an* experience.

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[38] ibid, 161
[39] Dewey, John. *Art As Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934), 35
[40] ibid, 36

Experiences act as both a means and an end, according to Dewey. Experiences have some sort of end goal; it is what drives the experience into completion and gives them a sense of unity. When solving a math problem, a mathematician has the ultimate goal of getting to the solution. When meeting with a friend, an individual may have the ultimate goal of getting to know that person better. Thus, upon completing an experience, every individual has achieved some sort of end, which defines the experience.

But merely reaching the end of an experience is not enough for Dewey. Instead, in addition to being a completion of a particular experience, then *end* of an experience acts as a *means* for another experience. In other words, each experience leads to individual *growth*, or "the cumulative movement of action toward a later result".[41] He explains "all ends and values that are cut off from the ongoing process become arrests, fixations. They strive to fixate what has been gained instead of using it to open the road and point the way to new and better experiences".[42] Therefore, in order for an experience to be used for individual growth, after completing an experience that individual must be able to reflect upon the experience and then use it as a key to completing further experiences. The *end* of one experience, therefore, should be used as a *means* to another.

Dewey gives various examples of experiences as a means to an end in *How We Think*, one of them called "A Case of Practical Deliberation". He explains:

> "The other day, when I was down town on 16th street, a clock caught my eye. I saw that the hands pointed to 12:20. This suggested that I had and engagement at 124th Street, at one o'clock. I reasoned that as it had taken me an hour to come

[41] Dewey, John. *Democracy and Education* (Simon and Brown; 2011), 26
[42] Dewey, John. "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us" in *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953 Vol. 14: 1939-1941*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 229

> down on a surface car, I should probably be twenty minutes late if I returned the same way. I might save twenty minutes by a subway express. But was there a station near? If not, I might lose more than twenty minutes in looking for one. Then I thought of the elevated, and saw there was such a line within two blocks. But where was the station? If it were several blocks above or below the street I was on, I should lose time instead of gaining it. My mind went back to the subway express as quicker than the elevated; furthermore, I remembered that it went nearer than the elevated to the part of 124th Street I wished to reach, so that time would be saved at the end of the journey. I concluded in favor of the subway, and reached my destination by one o'clock."[43]

The illustration demonstrates everyday usage of previous experiences, and the formulation of ideas out of experience. The narrator of this situation is *reminded* that he has an engagement at one o'clock by looking at the clock, and then draws on his experiences with all the means of transportation to determine the most efficient way to get there. Dewey says that "the function of reflective thought is…to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled and harmonious";[44] so in this situation, the conflict is how he will get to his engagement on time, and through reflective thought he is able to find the best possible route. It is in his reflection that *thinking* occurs. In other words, "thinking arises out of a directly experienced situation"[45] rather than magically out of thin air.

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[43] Dewey, *How We Think*, 188
[44] ibid, 195
[45] ibid, 193

Because experiences necessarily are improved and guided by previous experiences, a school acts as an environment where students are given the opportunity to have experiences that will add to other, real life experiences. Dewey claims that "the most frequent cause of failure in school to secure genuine thinking from students is the failure to insure the existence of an experience situation of such a nature as to call out thinking in which these out-of-school situations do".[46] This means that more often than not, schools provide textbook experiences of science, math and other subjects through which the practical applicability is obscure. Without knowing how in-school experiences apply to real-life experiences, students are unable to pull from those experiences when thinking reflectively, and thus in-school experiences do not contribute to overall growth. For Dewey, then, practical education means education that contributes to growth and enriches further experiences.

Progressive Education

Dewey clearly dislikes traditional education through lectures and assessments because it treats assessments as the end of learning, and leaves it to the pupils to determine how their education relates to their growth. Dewey, therefore, suggests that *progressive* education would demonstrate the connection between a pupil's education and experience.

Unlike traditional education, which is based on observation and guidance, progressive education is based on individual discovery. Dewey explains "the first stage of contact with any new material, at whatever age of maturity, must inevitably be of the trial and error sort. An individual must actually try, in play or work, to do something with material in carrying out his own impulsive activity, and then note the interaction of

[46] ibid, 194

his energy and that of the material employed".[47] Think of a small child playing with blocks shaped like a circle, square and rectangle, and another object with a circular hole, a rectangular hole and a square hole. The child tries to fit the blocks into all of the holes through trial and error, and while doing so, the child thinks and discovers how shapes work. In the same way, when a child is frequently read to at nighttime, he may want to be able to read himself. A child learning to read will look at the pictures for clues, sound out the words, and guess what the next word may be based on the rest of the sentence. A child learning to read, then, also is thinking and discovering how to read a story.

This is the basis of Dewey's progressive education. While the child is playing with blocks or reading the book, *thinking* is aroused in the child. Similarly, Dewey wants to ensure thinking in education. Thus, he believes that in order to "realize what an experience… means, we have to call to mind the sort of situation that presents itself outside of school; the sort of occupations that interest and engage activity in ordinary life".[48] Pupils must be put in a situation where they are actively *doing* something, instead of simply observing, because then learning will occur naturally, and the connections between education and experience will be clearer.

Dewey describes the progressive educative experience according to five essential methods:

> "first that the pupil have a genuine situation of experience—that there be a continuous activity in which he is interested for its own sake; secondly, that a genuine problem develop within this situation as a stimulus to thought; third, that he possess the information and make observations needed to deal with it; fourth,

[47] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 85
[48] ibid, 86

> that suggested solutions occur to him which he shall be responsible for developing in an orderly way; fifth, that he have opportunity and occasion to test his ideas by application, to make their meaning clear and to discover for himself their validity"[49]

Thus it is clear that through this method, students are able to learn how to think in everyday situations, instead of simply applying memorized facts to assessments.

With students learning through discovery instead of lectures, they are able to clearly see the results of their work and directly relate it to ordinary life. As explained above, when students are taught through lectures and assessments, the end of education becomes "finding out what the teacher wants, what will satisfy the teacher in recitation and examination and outward deportment".[50] In addition, this style of traditional education creates deference to the teacher as an authority figure; the student must work to please the teacher, instead of the teacher working to educate the student. But learning through discovery makes the end of education the experience of learning. Students are presented with a problem, and solve that problem through genuine experience, which makes the end of education growth.

It is not difficult to see how practical education, then, can be misunderstood to be vocationalism. After all, the purpose of progressive methods is to ensure clear applicability to everyday life. However, insisting that *practical* education is therefore vocaltionalism assumes that all that a person's life is devoted only to work. In contrast, progressive education prepares individuals for all aspects of life including work, social engagements, and most importantly, play. Therefore, for Dewey the purpose of

[49] ibid, 90-91
[50] ibid, 87

education *is* preparing individual for vocation, but it is also "to ensure the continuance of education by organizing the powers that insure growth. The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling".[51] Practical education gives us the opportunity to experience the richness and fullness of life on the whole, not only through vocation.

A clear example of practical education is a student learning about friction. The student is given a marble and is educated about gravity then is able to test the marbles motion on various surfaces. The object of the experiment is to find which surface allows the marble to go fastest, so the student tests it on smooth surfaces, rough surfaces, oily surfaces in order to determine which surface the marble moves quickest on. Perhaps they are also given different textured objects, such as wooden balls, rubber balls and a steel ball to test how each of the different textures reacts with the different surfaces. Later in life when the student is faced with an experience that requires knowledge of friction, such as driving a car on an icy road, they will be able to draw on their experience in the classroom testing the marbles on the different surfaces, which will allow them to have a safer experience.

Or, a student is given a philosophical text and asked to consider the ideas in it and form his own opinions. Then, in the upcoming class the student is able to present his opinions to a group of fellow students who have read the same text. They all engage in discussion and come to various conclusions about the text, and then they are able to bring those conclusions to bear when reading future texts. Although this may seemingly resemble Adler's traditional education, in this situation the classroom acts like a

[51] ibid, 31

laboratory where students are able to test their theories, instead of sitting through a lecture and then being tested on the material.

In these cases, students are presented with an experience that leads to thought and growth and the results of the experience leads to richer and fuller experiences in the future. However, it's not entirely clear how this type of educational system would work with the liberal arts. Practical education clearly offers an effective method for demonstrating the purpose of scientific education to students, but does it also effectively demonstrate to students the relevance of the liberal arts in play?

Adler and Aesthetics: Imaginative Literature

In order to answer the above question, we must consider Adler's perspective on aesthetic education. The purpose of *How to Read a Book* is to develop a set of guidelines for individuals to read the Great Books. However, Adler separates two different kinds of reading: the reading of expository literature, that is philosophy, science and math, and the reading of imaginative literature, such as poetry, drama and narrative. He devotes nearly the entire book to the rules of reading expository literature, and only a brief chapter to imaginative literature. However, Adler includes imaginative literature in his list of Great Books, such as Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, the complete works of Shakespeare and Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Thus it is clear that aesthetics, at least in literature, is somewhat important in education.

Reading imaginative literature, according to Adler, differs from reading expository literature. He explains that reading is a means for receiving communication, but expository and imaginative literature communicate different forms of knowledge. He claims that "expository books *do* communicate what is eminently and essentially

communicable—*abstract knowledge*; whereas imaginative books *try* to communicate what is essentially and profoundly incommunicable—*concrete experience*".[52] Because concrete experience is, according to Adler, incommunicable, writers do the next best thing; they simulate an actual experience through the reader's imagination for the enjoyment of the reader.

But this is the key difference between expository literature and imaginative literature for Adler; expository literature is written to instruct while imaginative literature is written *only* to delight. Adler recognizes that some people may insist that imaginative literature *also* instructs, but he claims that we are not instructed "in the same way as we are taught by scientific and philosophical books. We learn from experience—experience that we have in the course of our daily lives. So, too, we can learn from the vicarious, or artistically created, experiences which fiction produces in our imagination".[53] But we should not be fooled into believing that literature has a message or argument of any sort. Adler even outlines various rules for "what not to do" when reading imaginative literature, including 1) don't try to find a "message" in a novel, play or poem and 2) don't look for terms, propositions, and arguments in imaginative literature.[54] These rules have in common the core idea that imaginative literature is not written to convey any sort of philosophical, political or sociological truth.

In addition, Adler adds various rules for reading and analyzing literature, however instead of interpreting the message of the literature, the rules focus on aesthetic appreciation. Adler offers structural, interpretive and critical rules in order to make what he considers a sound judgment in appreciation of the book. He offers advice for

[52] Adler, *How To Read*, 298
[53] ibid, 303
[54] ibid, 304-305

understanding the beauty of language, character development, story arch, etc. That way, a reader's appreciation of a novel, poem or play is based on how effectively the author conveyed the experience, instead of based on his or her own personal taste. However, he continually emphasizes that a book cannot be judged based on how effectively it conveyed a message because, according to Adler, works of imaginative literature do not contain a message.

Although he does not directly state it, Adler's insistence that imaginative literature does not have a message may be in order to resist the practicality of aesthetics. By claiming that imaginative literature is not written to instruct, but to delight, he suggests that it cannot be taught through Dewey's practical means. In fact, if it is true that literature cannot be analyzed in the way that philosophy and science can be, then it seems that the only way to learn to read imaginative literature is to naturally enjoy reading it. It cannot be examined through progressive educational methods, and thus the only way to teach students to ensure that students read imaginative literature is by traditional teaching methods.

But Adler's assumption that imaginative literature has no message is problematic. *Part* of what makes reading great imaginative literature great is recognizing its political or philosophical significance. For example, structurally, *Paradise Lost* is an attempt to write a Christian Epic in the tradition of Homer, which is an impressive undertaken alone. If *Paradise Lost* is to be read by Adler's rules, readers are *only* meant to analyze the structure and beauty of language in the work. In doing this, the readers miss the political and philosophical significance of the work; significance that Adler denies even exists. However it's certainly no accident that Milton, who was a political figure and a

Parliamentarian, wrote about a "paradise" that was "lost" shortly after the Restoration of the English monarch.

Additionally, by only devoting a small chapter of *How to Read a Book* to imaginative literature, and then explaining that imaginative literature has no meaning and should only be appreciated structurally, Adler creates a hierarchy of educational objectives. In other words, Adler operates under the Aristotelian idea that the study of philosophy and of the cosmos is the most virtuous form of leisure, which may not necessarily be true. In addition, Adler fails to treat other artistic forms, such as dance and visual art, as intellectual at all. This is potentially attributed to Adler's narrow conception of meaning in imaginative literature, which then can be extended to a misunderstanding of meaning in art in general. Adler's goal in *How To Read a Book* is to establish intellectualism and understanding while individuals read, which he sees as the highest form of education. But if there is similar intellectualism in all forms of play and aesthetic experience then learning to appreciate and create art is equally as important.

Dewey's Aesthetic Theory: *Art As Experience*

In his book *Art as Experience*, Dewey describes a type of experience unlike all other experiences: aesthetic experience. Broadly defined, an aesthetic experience for Dewey involves the creation and/or the aesthetic appreciation of art including literature, music, dance, and "shaping" or visual arts, but also including all types of aesthetic appreciation, such as appreciation of nature and philosophical inquiry. Dewey notes that experiences in general have aesthetic qualities; in fact it is the aesthetic qualities of an intellectual experience that completes the experience. However, an aesthetic experience is one where the purpose and intention of the experience is aesthetic in nature.

Dewey notes the discrepancy between structure and meaning in *Art as Experience*, and disagrees with Adler's idea that art should be evaluated by structure alone. He claims that "the denial of meaning to art usually rests upon the assumption that the kind of value (and meaning) that a work of art possesses is so unique that it is without community or connection with the contents of other modes of experience than the esthetic".[55] Essentially, this means that art is too esoteric to be understood in the way that science and math is understood. Instead, Dewey suggests that art *expresses* meanings rather than clearly stating them, as science does.[56] Much of the expression of art is done through abstraction, which is usually associated with "distinctively intellectual undertakings…[but] actually is found in every work of art".[57] Therefore, art expresses meaning through abstraction. This is where Adler's confusion lies; because meanings are not clearly stated through art, Adler denies their existence. On the contrary, when a work of art is looked at as a complete experience, it is clear that "the expressiveness, the esthetic meaning, is the picture [or work or art] itself".[58]

As mentioned above, Adler's argument resists practicality by insisting that art has no practical meaning, and thus art can only be learned through traditional teaching methods. However, because Dewey provides evidence that art does have meaning, it suggests that art can, and possibly should, be taught through progressive methods. Simply providing students with a reading list and teaching them how to appreciate literature structurally does not allow them to experience the literature fully. Instead,

[55] Dewey, *Art As Experience*, 84
[56] ibid, 84
[57] ibid, 94
[58] ibid, 86

progressive teaching methods allow children to have complete aesthetic experiences by giving them the opportunity to *discover* meaning in all forms of art.

Dewey explains the core difference between an aesthetic and practical or intellectual experience as a difference of ends. In a practical experience, "the conclusion has value in its own account",[59] meaning that the discovery or truth found at the end of a practical experience is valuable. A scientific experience is complete for the scientist when his experimentation finally demonstrates something new about the world. The end of that experience, thus, is the truth discovered at the conclusion, which gives that experience its completeness.

In contrast, there is no single end of an aesthetic experience, rather "the end, the terminus, is significant not by itself, but as the integration of the parts".[60] In other words, all of the parts work together in a work of art to create a complete aesthetic experience. Dewey uses the example of a novel to explain this idea. The novel itself does not lie in the final sentence, or even the final chapter. Instead, all of the parts of the novel work together to for a complete experience. Each part is an intrinsic part of the end.

Next, as explained above, Dewey believes that practical and intellectual experiences act as a means, as well as an end. This is how experiences lead to growth, which I defined above as "the cumulative movement of action toward a later result".[61] In *Art as Experience*, Dewey explains that because of this, the results of practical experiences function like a factual statement, which is then used for directions to the next experience. A "statement" is like a "traffic sign"; in the same way as a traffic sign acts as

[59] ibid, 55
[60] ibid, 55
[61] Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 26

a direction to a new place, the results of a scientific experiment acts as direction to further scientific investigation.[62]

Alternatively, instead of providing direction to a new experience, an aesthetic experience *constitutes* an experience. An aesthetic experience is consummatory and complete in itself; it does not act as a means for further experiences. He explains, "the poem, or painting does not operate in the dimension of correct descriptive statement but in that experience itself".[63] Further, Dewey explains, "imaginative experience exemplifies more fully than any other kind of experience what experience itself is in its very movement and structure".[64] Using the traffic sign example from above, Dewey compares an aesthetic experience to the city that all traffic signs were leading to. It is the ultimate experience. Dewey's idea of aesthetic experiences as the end of experience thus acts as a parallel to Aristotle's idea of leisure as the "first principle of all action"[65] mentioned above. Aesthetic experience, like leisure, does not serve a directly vocational purpose; instead the purpose of vocation is to provide an opportunity for aesthetic experience.

In the same way as Aristotle denies that leisure is amusement, Dewey denies the theory that art *is* play. Play, for Dewey, is "an attitude of freedom from subordination to an end imposed by external necessity, as opposed, that is, to labor".[66] Play exists because there is a dualism between freedom and necessity; there are things we do because we are subject to the order of the workplace, and things we do spontaneously as a result of being free from work. Play is what we do with that freedom. On the other hand, "the very existence of a work of art is evidence that there is no such opposition between the

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[62] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 84
[63] ibid, 85
[64] ibid, 281
[65] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337b33
[66] Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 279

spontaneity of the self and objective order and law".[67] Thus Dewey believes that the falsity of the theory of art as play "lies in its failure to recognize that esthetic experience involves a definite reconstruction of objective materials… The artist is concerned with the exercise of activities having a definitely objective reference; an effect upon material so as to convert it into a medium of expression".[68] Art is the playful transformation of objective materials into something expressive. This could mean the transformation of paints and canvas into an expressive painting, or the transformation of motion into an expressive dance. It is the perfect combination of freedom and order.

Art functions as a way to eliminate the gap between work and play, for Dewey. The gap between the two is "largely produced by social conditions" and putting art into the "play" category solidifies the gap rather than helps to eliminate it.[69] What Dewey calls the "play theory" defines the role of art based on a "deep-seated antagonism between the individual and the world…that freedom can only be attained through escape".[70] Art, both creation and appreciation, acts as the escape from the world according to this theory. Instead, Dewey believes "actuality and possibility or ideality, the new and the old, objective material and personal response, the individual and the universal, surface and depth, sense and meaning, are integrated in an [aesthetic] experience in which they are all transfigured from the significance that belongs to them when isolated in reflection".[71] An aesthetic experience is complete because it incorporates all of these dualisms. Therefore, for Dewey, calling art "play", isolates it in only part of a dualism, depleting it of its completeness.

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[67] ibid 279
[68] ibid, 279
[69] ibid, 280
[70] ibid, 280
[71] ibid, 297

However, Dewey does recognize some truth in the play theory. He explains that the theory is correct in its "emphasis upon the unconstrained character of esthetic experience".[72] It is this part of the play theory that my theory of play hopes to capture. It is based on the playfulness of children, which Dewey describes as the "complete merging of playfulness and seriousness".[73] Young children, who are free from the constraints of life, take their play very seriously. They are able to draw, paint, write stories, sing, and dance without being constrained by any rules or goals. But gradually they begin to regulate their playful activities. Dewey explains that "play becomes a game; it has 'rules'".[74] There are distinct times for play and for seriousness, and when play does happen, it is driven toward a particular end. Perhaps a child is trying to win the game, build a tower, or complete a puzzle; in either situation, the activity of play is constrained by various rules and an ultimate end. In that way, this type of play mirrors work because it is driven by an end goal, and the only difference is that in play, rules and constraints are self-imposed. Alternatively, children also occupy themselves with entirely unconstrained, but also relatively mindless activities, which is a kind of play that resembles Aristotle's "amusement". These activities, such as watching TV, often provide the relaxation that Aristotle hopes amusement will provide, but are also not as intellectual or creative as the original type of unconstrained play.

Thus, after a certain point, children occupy themselves in either play that is directed toward a self-imposed goal or they occupy themselves with mindless activity. But their creativity and imagination generally has disappeared. Many children eventually stop singing, dancing, drawing and writing for play, especially if they do not think that

[72] ibid, 279
[73] ibid, 279
[74] ibid, 278

they are "good at it". This self-consciousness drives them to forgo aesthetic experiences in pursuit of more "useful" activities. It is *this* attitude that causes students to choose what they believe to be practical courses of study (but, as explained above, these courses of study are actually more aptly named vocational). But they have lost the appreciation of selfish intellectual activities and fallen prey to an "end oriented" mentality. By directing all actions toward an ultimate end, many people neglect the ultimate end of aesthetic experience. Instead, I suggest that true "play" is the original, youthful type of play, and therefore encouraging aesthetic experience in education is, essentially, the maintenance and growth of unconstrained play.

The purpose of education, as explained earlier, is to create richer and fuller human experiences. Based on Dewey's account of aesthetic experience, it is clear that the fullest and richest experiences are those that include aesthetic experiences. In fact, aesthetic experiences are intrinsically valuable for Dewey, as they are complete in themselves. Therefore, it seems that encouraging and maintaining the unconstrained play of a child, both by teaching the creation and appreciation of aesthetically pleasing objects and experiences, is the end of education. This does not mean encouraging the immature playfulness of a child, rather capturing the aesthetic curiosity of children and, through education, developing it into mature creativity and play. This means that, through progressive education and discovery, children will be able to grow in their aesthetic experiences, making them fuller and more complex.

Thus, consider this: a student is encouraged to express himself in the form of a painting. Through experimentation with colors and lines, the student is able to determine which work together in such a way that they can convey whatever it is that they are trying

to express. Through his experience painting, he learns how to express himself through visual art.

Therefore, while progressive educational methods are less obviously useful for liberal arts subjects, they still offer a clearer connection to everyday life than traditional methods. Instead of forcing students to memorize sections from *Romeo and Juliet*, they are encouraged to draw on their own experiences to determine the meaning of the text as a whole. Or, instead of memorizing the dates different artworks were created for an assessment, students are given the opportunity to draw meaning from the work of art for a complete aesthetic experience. By teaching "play" through traditional methods, students lose their sense of unconstrained curiosity and creativity and play becomes mundane and mechanical. Progressive methods encourage students to play without constraints, and demonstrate the importance of play in a rich life. Therefore, Dewey's progressive methods offer a better technique for teaching students liberal arts.

Dewey's Democracy

Democracy, for Dewey, is not simply equality under the law. Instead, Dewey claims that the future of a true democracy lies in individuals accepting democracy as a personal way of life. This means democratic people should have a faith in human equality and should reject intolerance of every person's ideas. Individuals should see each other as equally valuable members of society regardless of gender, race, religion class or difference in opinion. Further, Dewey suggests "democracy is a way of personal life controlled not merely by faith in human nature in general but by faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished".[75] In other words, democracy is *not* simply equality under the law; the principles of

[75] Dewey, "Creative Democracy", 227

democracy should be internalized and democratic people should view each other as equal human beings with valuable knowledge and opinions, which is why they have the legal rights that they do.

But Dewey takes this further by explaining that:

> Democracy is a belief in the ability of human experience to generate the aims and methods by which further experience will grow in ordered richness. Every other form of moral and social faith rests upon the idea that experience must be subjected at some point or other to some form of external control; to some "authority" alleged to exist outside the processes of experience. Democracy is the faith that the process of experience is more important than any special result attained, so that special results achieved are of ultimate value only as they are used to enrich and order the ongoing process.[76]

Thus, a society that views each of its members as *equal* and *intelligent* beings will recognize the value of human experience, and utilize the merits of human experience to make future experiences richer. Individuals in a democracy come from different backgrounds and, thus bring a variety of experiences to the table. According to Dewey, modern democracy is having faith that the coming together different people will create richer experiences, which will then guide and shape society to create a better future.

As established above, Dewey believes that the *end* of experience is aesthetic experience; we have aesthetic experiences for their own sake, and everything else that we do is for the sake of aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic experiences are therefore the ultimate end of education. Similarly, Dewey explains that in an ideally democratic society, will be able to make future human experiences richer, and again, the richest and

[76] ibid, 229

fullest of human experiences are aesthetic experiences. Therefore, the most important way to increase richness in human experiences is through education that improves and encourages play.

Therefore, by adopting Dewey's view of aesthetic experience, it is clear that the most democratic society *will* educate all students in the liberal arts, because in doing, the society is giving its citizens the opportunity for virtuous play. This argument reflects Aristotle's argument in the *Politics*, where he sets out to find "what form of political community is best of all for those who are most able to realize their ideal of life".[77] If the ideal of life is one that involves aesthetic experience and play in leisure time as Dewey and I suggest, then it seems that a democracy is the best form of government because this is precisely what it can offer. And, the most democratic society is that which that encourages play in education.

Conclusion

According to educational debates in the early 1900's, and continuing on throughout the 20th century, it seemed that there were two separate educational paths; one that offered practical education for its students through progressive methods and another that offered liberal arts education through traditional methods. The former, which is attributed to John Dewey, was considered to be the most democratic because it provided students with useful skills and opportunities. The latter, which reflects Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins' ideas, relies on deference to authority both in determining which books are Great Books and by relying on pleasing a teacher as an unintentional end of education, so is therefore more elitist.

[77] Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260b29-30

These educational paths seem incongruent when the ultimate end of education is understood to be preparing students for a vocation. Alternatively, when society understands the end of education to be giving all citizens opportunities to lead a virtuous and full life, it seems that a liberal arts education is a more democratic choice. This idea reflects Aristotle's discussion of leisure in the *Politics*, however Aristotle insists that time spent contemplating the cosmos and virtue. Alternatively, I suggest that aesthetic experiences, such as painting, dancing and appreciation of art and nature, should be included in leisure time, or what I call play.

Adler and Hutchins offer a liberal arts curriculum based on reading the Great Books, which is seemingly the best type of education for the encouragement of play. However, they insist that liberal arts education should be taught through traditional teaching method, such as through assessment and lecture. These methods make it the ultimate end of education to please the teacher, instead of to enrich the lives of the student, and therefore Adler and Hutchins Great Books education proves to be not only less effective as a method of teaching, but also less democratic.

In contrast, Dewey's system of practical education focuses on demonstrating to students how their educational experiences relate to real life experiences. It seems, therefore, that practical education emphasizes vocationalism, which is precisely the criticism of Adler and Hutchins. But Dewey demonstrates that teaching practical knowledge by traditional methods eliminates thinking from the educational experience by emphasizing memorization and pleasing the teacher, and therefore leads to monotony and vocationalism. Further, assuming that practical education specifically applies to an occupation assumes that occupation is the core of our existence. Rather, Dewey claims

that practical education is education that clearly applies to everyday life, in vocation as well as play. This type of education is best done through progressive teaching methods, which rely on the experience of discovery and offer clear connections to real world experiences.

The connection between progressive teaching methods and a liberal arts curriculum is not entirely obvious based on Dewey's educational theories. But, looking at Adler's discussion of imaginative literature demonstrates that Adler considers works of fiction to be literature only to be admired for its structural beauty. Further, Adler offers no accounts for how to appreciate other forms of art. Dewey, on the other hand, offers a full account of aesthetic experience in the work *Art As Experience*, and explains that aesthetic experiences are intrinsically valuable, and are complete experiences in themselves. Study of the liberal arts through progressive methods, then, would be creating one's own works of art and discovering and appreciating works already created.

Traditional education methods rest on deference to authority figures, such as teachers and administrators, to determine the Great Books included in the curriculum. Similarly, instead of learning how their education applies to real life, students learn to gain a teacher's approval on assessments. These parts of traditional education reveal its elitism. On the other hand, Dewey's practical and progressive educational techniques are an attempt to provide solid education for everyone in order to enrich the lives of everyone. Further, it seems that the best democracy would offer an opportunity for liberal arts education in order to increase the amount of play in every individual's life, thereby enriching human experience on the whole. By offering an opportunity for aesthetic education, students not only will be able to express themselves completely, but

there will be more artwork for them to appreciate. Thus, Dewey's progressive educational methods that include a liberal arts curriculum prove to be the most democratic teaching methods.